

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001213

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR URGES TURKISH MFA TO PRESS SYRIA ON
TROOP WITHDRAWAL

REF: A. STATE 39018

[1](#)B. ANKARA 916

[1](#)C. ANKARA 296

[1](#)D. STATE 39023

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman, E.O. 12958,
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: On March 4 Ambassador urged Turkish MFA U/S Tuygan to have the MFA press the Syrians on troop withdrawal from Lebanon. Ambassador followed up with ref A points on March 6. Tuygan said the GOT is contemplating a letter from PM Erdogan to Assad. Tuygan called ref A points "well taken" and undertook to pass them to FM Gul immediately. The Ambassador also urged the MFA to press the Syrians to close Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) offices and share information on Syrian troop movements, End Summary

Ambassador Urges Turks to Press Assad

[1](#)2. (C) On March 4, the Ambassador told Tuygan Turkey is out of step with the international community in not pressing the Syrians to withdraw from Lebanon. The Ambassador noted Turkey has invested considerable political capital in developing relations with Syria over the past year and now is the time to use that capital. The Ambassador urged an unambiguous message from Turkey to Syria to comply with UNSCR [1](#)559. Noting that Turkey has sent FM Gul to Israel and the Palestinian territories and hopes to play a constructive role in the Middle East peace process, the Ambassador suggested the letter include a strongly-worded statement telling Assad to shut down PIJ offices in Damascus as well.

[1](#)3. (C) Tuygan said the MFA is considering a letter from PM Erdogan to Assad urging compliance. Erdogan was on a trip to Africa at the time and Tuygan said the MFA would raise it with him after his return (Erdogan returned March 6). Tuygan said the MFA has over the past few months blocked requests from Turkish defense firms to sell weapons to Syria. Referring to recent Embassy demarches urging the Turks not to ratify the Turkey/Syria free trade agreement (refs B and C), Tuygan said the agreement is required by the Euro-Med Dialogue. The Ambassador urged Tuygan to re-check this; our understanding is that Syrian-EU relations are currently on hold.

[1](#)4. (S) Ambassador raised ref A points with Tuygan on March 6, relaying our high concern that Syrian and pro-Syrian Lebanese forces could re-position to threaten demonstrators in Martyrs' Square (ref D). The Ambassador noted that the USG has warned Damascus and Beirut the USG will hold them responsible for any violence directed toward peaceful demonstrators. The Ambassador noted that as a neighbor to Syria, Turkey may be monitoring Syrian troop movements; the U.S. will welcome any information Turkey may be able to pass on this score (see IIR 6 898 0135 05; Ankara TU 1212).

[1](#)5. (C) Tuygan replied ref A points were "well taken" and would be relayed to FM Gul immediately. Tuygan had not read Assad's speech but said "at a minimum" Assad was not precise on the conditions of the Syrian withdrawal. Ambassador noted March 4 press reports that Turkish President Sezer plans a visit to Syria; Tuygan replied the visit had been tentatively scheduled for April but is now being reconsidered.

Media Commentary

[1](#)6. (SBU) There has been much media comment about Syria. In an interview published March 2 in the newspaper Hurriyet, FM Gul characterized Assad as popular in Syria and said he should be supported. The few commentators who have addressed Gul's comments have been critical. Commentators have been split on the larger question of Turkey's relations with Syria. However, when we spoke to one AK MP privately about Gul's comments, he made no attempt to defend them (he is not in the Gul camp), quickly dismissing them as "wrong."

Another Bland MFA Statement

[1](#)7. (SBU) On March 7, the MFA issued a statement on Syria and Lebanon. Like the February 14 statements, it was notably

bland, supporting Lebanese independence and UNSCR 1559, saying that 1559's implementation "has gained crucial importance." The statement called for free elections in Lebanon and said Turkey "is pleased that Syrian units will begin to be withdrawn from Lebanon today (sic)."

EDELMAN